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Mabel Albertson

Mabel Ida Albertson (July 24, 1901 – September 28, 1982) was an American actress of television, stage, radio and film who portrayed Phyllis Stephens in the TV sitcom *Bewitched*.

Early years

Mabel Ida Albertson was born on July 24, 1901, in Haverhill, Massachusetts, to Flora (Craft) and Leopold Albertson, who were Russian-born Jewish immigrants.[1][2] Her younger brother was actor Jack Albertson, who played Grandpa Joe in *Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory*. Their mother, a stock actress, supported the family by working in a shoe factory.[1]

Albertson graduated from the New England School of Speech and Expression.[3]

Albertson traced her show business career back to age 13, when she was paid $5 per performance to play piano behind palm trees for a reader. She later moved to California and became involved with the Pasadena Playhouse.[4]

She "moved directly into professional stage work in stock, vaudeville, and night clubs, appearing with Jimmy Durante."[3]

Career

Film and television

Albertson portrayed Phyllis Stephens, Darrin's neurotic, interfering mother, on the television sitcom *Bewitched*,[5]:97 who invariably ended her stays at the Stephens' home by saying to her husband, "Frank, take me home. I have a sick headache." She also played the mother of Jack Benny (seven years her senior) on several episodes of his television series. During 1972–1973, she played Mabel, the mother-in-law of Paul Lynde on *The Paul Lynde Show*. She appeared in at least one episode of the courtroom drama series *Perry Mason*: as Carrie Wilson in the Season 6, 1962 episode titled "The Case of the Hateful Hero". Albertson also guest-starred as the mother of Marilyn Munster's would-be suitor in the first broadcast

Mabel Albertson

Albertson in 1957

Born	Mabel Ida Albertson July 24, 1901 Haverhill, Massachusetts, U.S.
Died	September 28, 1982 (aged 81) Santa Monica, California, U.S.
Education	New England School of Speech and Expression
Occupation	Actress
Years active	1928–1975
Television	*Bewitched* (1964–1971)
Spouses	Harold Austin Ripley (m. 1925; div. 1936) Ken Englund (m. 1937; sep. 1950)
Children	2, including George Englund
Relatives	Jack Albertson (brother)

Anabel Englund (great-granddaughter)

episode of *The Munsters*, "Munster Masquerade". Dragnet 1967 "The Bullet" Albertson played Jessie Gaynor, and she played the mother of Barbara and Margaret Whiting in *Those Whiting Girls*.[6] She also played the dean of a women's college in an episode of *The Tab Hunter Show*, Susannah's mother in *Accidental Family*,[5] Alice's mother in *Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice*,[5]:119 Donald Hollinger's mother on *That Girl*,[5]:1065 Irene Brady in *The Tom Ewell Show*,[5]:1092 Howard Sprague's mother on *The Andy Griffith Show*, Miss Ramsey on *Hazel*, Mrs. White on *The Lucy Show* episode "Lucy and the Missing Stamp", Eileen Ruby, Harry Ruby's wife, in *Make Room For Daddy* episode "Danny Goes On USO Tour", Dick Van Dyke's mother on *The New Dick Van Dyke Show*, and Ethel Kendricks on the *Mary Tyler Moore Show* episode "Anyone Who Hates Kids and Dogs", Gertrude Mills on *The George Burns and Gracie Allen Show*. *Rawhide* Season 2 Episode 24 as Kalla, Gypsy Queen. In the 1957 episode of Gunsmoke, "Cows and Cribs", she played Ma Smalley, a kindly boarding house owner. In the 1963 episode of Gunsmoke, "Kate Heller", she played the title character, as well as "Gody Baines" in a 1961 episode (Long, Long Trail). In 1966 she played Madam Adella in the *Bonanza* episode "A Dollar's Worth of Trouble". In Season 1 (1952/53) of *Adventures of Superman*, she played Kate White, Perry White's sister in the episode "Drums of Death" originally aired January 16, 1953. A memorable early film role for Albertson was as a proper banker's wife who is repulsed by the bucolic title characters in *Ma and Pa Kettle at Waikiki* (1955). She was also seen in *She's Back on Broadway*, *So This Is Love*, *About Mrs. Leslie*, *Forever, Darling*, *The Long, Hot Summer*, *Don't Give Up the Ship*,[3] *On a Clear Day You Can See Forever*[7] and as Mrs. Van Hoskins, a wealthy woman whose jewels are stolen, in the screwball comedy film *What's Up, Doc?* (1972).

Other works

Albertson was heard on *Dress Rehearsal*, *Joe Rines' Dress Rehearsal*, and the *Phil Baker Show*.[8] She was also a writer for radio programs.[7] Albertson's Broadway credits include *The Egg* (1962) and *Xmas in Las Vegas* (1965).[9]

Albertson in 1933

Death

According to her former daughter-in-law, Cloris Leachman, Mabel Albertson died on September 28, 1982, of Alzheimer's disease at St. John's Hospital, after suffering seven years of poor health[10] in Santa Monica, California at age 81. Her ashes were scattered into the Pacific Ocean.

Filmography

Year	Title	Role	Notes
1928	*Gang War*	Reporter in the Prologue	
1939	*Mutiny on the Blackhawk*	The Widow	
1952	*About Face*	Mrs. Carter	Uncredited
1952	*My Pal Gus*	Mrs. Frisbee	Uncredited
1953	*Adventures of Superman*	Kate White	Season 1 - Episode 18 - Drums of Death
1953	*She's Back on Broadway*	Velma Trumbull	
1953	*So This Is Love*	Mary Garden	
1954	*About Mrs. Leslie*	Mrs. Sims	
1954	*Black Widow*	Sylvia	Uncredited
1955	*Ma and Pa Kettle at Waikiki*	Teresa Andrews	
1955	*The Cobweb*	Regina Mitchell-Smyth	
1956	*Ransom!*	Mrs. Partridge	
1956	*Forever, Darling*	Society Reporter	
1957	*Four Girls in Town*	Mrs. Conway	
1957	*Man Afraid*	Maggie	
1958	*The Female Animal*	Irma Jones	
1958	*The Long, Hot Summer*	Elizabeth Stewart	
1958	*Home Before Dark*	Inez Winthrop	
1959	*The Hangman*	Amy Hopkins	
1959	*Don't Give Up the Ship*	Mrs. Trabert	
1959	*The Gazebo*	Miss Chandler	
1959	*Have Gun Will Travel*	Madame Chalon	
1960	*All the Fine Young Cannibals*	Mrs. McDowall	
1961	*All in a Night's Work*	Mrs. Kingsley Sr.	
1962	*Period of Adjustment*	Mrs. Alice McGill	
1966	*A Fine Madness*	Chairwoman	
1967	*Daniel Boone*	Mrs. Abigail Adam’s	Episode: “Take the Southbound Stage”
1967	*Barefoot in the Park*	Harriet	
1970	*On a Clear Day You Can See Forever*	Mrs. Hatch	

1972	*What's Up, Doc?*	Mrs. Van Hoskins	

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External links

Biography portal

- Mabel Albertson (https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0016781/) at IMDb
- Mabel Albertson (https://www.allmovie.com/artist/p697) at AllMovie
- Mabel Albertson (https://www.ibdb.com/broadway-cast-staff/484296) at the Internet Broadway Database
- Mabel Albertson scrapbook, 1933-1939 (http://archives.nypl.org/the/21578), held by the Billy Rose Theatre Division, New York Public Library for the Performing Arts

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